

THE
COFFEE-HOUSE,
OR
FAIR FUGITIVE.

A
COMEDY
Of Five ACTS.

Written by Mr. VOLTAIRE.

Translated from the FRENCH.

Qualis Populea mærens Philomela sub umbra.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. WILKIE, at the Bible and Sun, in St.
Paul's Church-yard. M.DCC.LX.


[Price one Shilling and Six-pence.]



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THE
TRANSLATOR'S
PREFACE.

T might be a sufficient recommendation of this piece to say that it is Voltaire's; but the intrinsic merit of the production still speaks more strongly in its favour. The poet has taken nature alone for his guide, the language is just such as people in the circumstances in which he represents them would have spoken; and the turns of fortune are such as have actually been said to happen.

He every-where endeavours to speak only to the heart, without attempting to catch our applause; so that the only approbation the work may probably find is from the reader's feelings. It is a new effort in pursuit of nature, and can be classed among none of those kinds of composition so often described by the critics. Nature in every language, and every country, is the same; and no writer was ever more intimately acquainted with her than he; all his slightest sketches are therefore valuable; and this is, perhaps, one of those productions which will most contribute to heighten our esteem.

As the scene is laid in England, and the names consequently English, I have taken the liberty to alter those of the original, and have given
I some

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of them at least an English termination. As to the rest, the translation is nearly literal; I have neither added to the author's wit, nor retrenched what he has thought proper to give.

The reader, however, must not expect that brilliant dialogue for which many of our own comedies are remarkable, none of those forced adventures, or that snip-snap conversation found only in books, and not in life. He opens the story with the utmost simplicity, unfolds the plot with ease, and yet with dignity. The interest rises by just degrees to the last scene, where all is brought to a striking conclusion; those who desire wit and repartee will certainly be disappointed, tho' here and there the poet almost involun-

voluntarily bursts upon us, and discovers what he might have done in that province, had wit been his only aim.

As in his late dramatic performance, called Socrates, he pretends to have translated it from the English language, so also, in his preface to this piece, he makes the same pretence ; he attempts to imitate our freedom of thinking, and takes this method to palliate the freedom of his own. This piece, however, which we now present the reader, has nothing to shock the established modes of faith ; Voltaire, in this, appears the amiable friend of man, without opposing any particular system. Upon the whole, this little piece will appear to men of fine sensations the most pathetically pretty

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typerformance that has appeared this age; and such will find it an agreeable relaxation among the variety of modern publications, in which it is fashionable to address the imagination, and not the heart.

DRA-

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FABRICE. A good-natured man, the keeper of a Coffee-house.

CONSTANTIA. The fair fugitive.

Sir WILLIAM WOODVILLE. A gentleman of distinction, under misfortunes.

BELMONT. In love with Constantia. A man of fortune and interest,

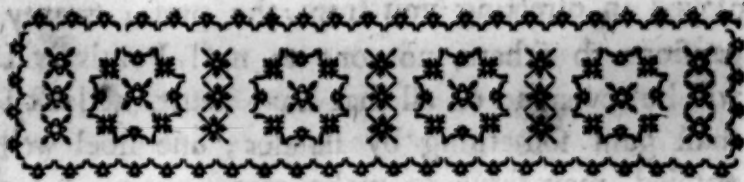
FREEPORT. A merchant, and an epitome of English manners,

SCANDAL. A sharper,

Lady ALTON. In love with Belmont.

Servants, and Company frequenting the Coffee-house,

SCENE, LONDON.



THE
COFFEE-HOUSE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE. A COFFEE-HOUSE, with
adjoining Apartments.

SCANDAL is discovered at a Table, with Papers before him, and reading the GAZETTE.

SCANDAL.

WHAT afflicting news! Favours bestowed on twenty different persons, not one upon me! To an old officer, one hundred pounds, for having done his duty. Great merit truly! A pension to the inventor of a new machine; another to a pilot; a third to a man of learning; a fourth to an applauded poet; and to me, nothing, to me not a single farthing! (*he throws down the Gazette.*) Ungrateful ministry, how can you use me thus, who am continually employed

B

played

ployed in directing you from the press; twenty pensions to others, not one to me! Positively I will be revenged on all that have merit, at least I shall gain something by slander; one libel well applied, may serve to make my fortune. I am resolved to sink the aspiring, and raise the unworthy, for that is the only way to succeed in this good world.

Enter FABRICE.

Good morrow, my friend, good morrow, all are provided for here but me: I want patience.

FABRICE.

Mr. Scandal, Mr. Scandal, you make yourself many enemies.

SCANDAL.

Why, I must own that it is natural for merit procure enemies.

FABRICE.

To be sincere, I fancy your enemies are by no means those that envy your merit or success. Excuse me, I have some friendship for you. I am displeased to hear the world speak of you as it does. I am even surpriz'd to find you so universally detested.

SCANDAL.

An evident symptom that I have merit, monsieur Fabrice.

FABRICE.

OR FAIR FUGITIVE.

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FABRICE.

That may be, yet this I only hear from yourself; others pretend that you are ignorant, but that's a trifle; some there are who arraign your good-nature, and that is what displeases, because I fancy such a temper opposite to my own.

SCANDAL.

As for my good-nature, people may question it as they please; but even malice must own that I am very good-natured among the ladies, particularly if they be handsome; and to convince you, I must insist on your introducing me to the beautiful stranger who lodges at your house, and whom I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing.

FABRICE.

Believe me, sir, the young lady will not be at all to your taste, for she never boasts of her own perfections, nor arraigns the pretensions of others.

SCANDAL.

How is it possible, if she knows no body, that she can condemn any; but tell me sincerely, have you not a small inclination towards the lady yourself, my good friend?

FABRICE.

Forgive me, sir, she has somewhat so noble in her air, that would repress the most ardent passion, besides her virtue.—

SCANDAL.

Oh her virtue—very good—

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FABRICE.

THE COFFEE-HOUSE,

FABRICE.

Yes, sir, her virtue. Don't you believe a woman can be virtuous? I tell you.—But I see an equipage from the country stop at the door, and a footman carrying in a portmanteau. It must be some gentleman of distinction who comes to lodge at my house.

SCANDAL.

My dear friend, take care to recommend me.

SCENE II. Sir WILLIAM WOODVILLE,
FABRICE, and SCANDAL.

Sir WILL.

Your name is Fabrice, sir, I presume.

FABRICE.

Sir, at your service,

Sir WILL.

My stay in town will be but short. (*Aside*) Too long perhaps for my safety; but misfortunes like mine are never to have an end.) I have been recommended to your house, and am induced from your character to make use of it.

FABRICE.

Sir, you may find here all the innocent amusements of life; if you chuse to dine in company, an ordinary; if alone, simple elegance; a lodging neatly furnish'd, and good company in the coffee-room.

Sir WILL.

Have you many lodgers beside?

FABRICE.

FABRICE.

But one young lady, at present, of beauty equal to her virtue.

SCANDAL.

Very virtuous to be sure. Ha, ha.

FABRICE.

Who lives in the most recluse manner that can be conceived.

Sir WILL.

I have nothing now to do with youth and beauty. Let an apartment be prepared, where I can be in solitude. (*Aside*, My miseries are insupportable.) Is there any news of consequence in town?

FABRICE.

This gentleman, Mr. Scandal, can inform you, no man knows the news of the town better, for he makes a great part of it himself; he's particularly useful to strangers. In the mean time, sir, I'll leave you, in order to make the necessary preparations for your accommodation. (*Exit*.)

SCANDAL.

Aside. Just arrived, by the gods. A man of distinction without doubt, if one may guess by his forbidding air. (*To Sir WILL.*) My lord, permit me to make an offering of my services, and my pen.

Sir

Sir WILL.

Sir, you mistake my title, it belongs only to folly to boast a title even when possessed of one; but it is arrogance to claim it when not our due. Pray, friend, what may be your employment in the family?

SCANDAL.

I don't belong to the family, I only make use of this coffee-house as the most convenient place for gathering politics and news. I am employ'd only by men of fashion: have you a friend that you would praise, or an enemy that you would censure; would you commend a dunce, or decry an establish'd reputation, you shall find none can serve you with better goods than I.

Sir WILL.

And is this, sir, your only employment?

SCANDAL.

And a very honourable one; is it not?

Sir WILL.

O! very honourable truly. You do indeed, sir, deserve exaltation, and the honour also of a surrounding multitude.

SCANDAL.

A mere Vandal, no regard in the world to men of letters.

(*Afide.*)

SCENE

SCENE III.

SCANDAL sitting down to write, several Persons appearing as conversing in the Coffee-House. Sir WILLIAM advances alone to the Edge of the Theatre.

Sir WILL.

Where will my complicated miseries have an end! Banish'd from my native country, fearing an enemy in every face, a wanderer over the world, lost to my home, my honours, my children and wife! What is there now but death that is left me? I have indeed an only daughter, perhaps, a poor forlorn wanderer like myself; nay, even obliged to prostitution for bread. The thought on't shocks me. Yet to die without being revenged on those who have reduced me to such distress! Shall he, shall Belmont live, who has thus destroy'd my happiness; who has thus erased me from among the living; who has deprived me even of my name, and left me nothing but the shadow of an existence? shall he be happy while I continue a poor discontented being, only looking round for a convenient retreat to retire and die in!

One of the GENTLEMEN in the Coffee-room slapping SCANDAL on the Shoulder.

First GENT.

Were you last night at the new play? The poet was greatly approved, he is a rising genius of great

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great merit, and I hope the public will consider his talents and his indigence.

Second GENT.

New plays are but trifles, especially when the affairs of the nation are going to ruin ; the stocks are quite sunk ; luxury predominates ; the state and I are undone.

SCANDAL, continuing to write.

That's false ; the play is wretched stuff, the author is a dunce, and his patronizers little better ; and as for the affairs of the nation, this, this very pamphlet shall sink them into perdition.

Second GENT.

Thy pamphlet is but a catch-penny, I know more than thou and all thy writings. It is said the Grand Signior is now meditating a descent upon Carolina, and the stocks continue to sink till we have more certain information.

Sir WILL.

(*Still apart.*) Tho' old Belmont be dead, his son is still alive ; from him I expect revenge. At least, before I die, I shall punish in his offspring all the crimes of the father.

Third GENT.

The new play seem'd to be in my judgment exquisite.

SCANDAL.

We have scarce any taste remaining among us ; I tell thee it is detestable.

Third

Third GENT.

I know nothing that can be called detestable but what you write.

Second GENT.

The stocks are falling, I'll maintain it, nor will they rise except we send another ambassador to the Porte.

SCANDAL.

If we would retrieve the reputation of the age, we ought to damn every new piece that appears.

All FOUR together.

Abfurd! ridiculous! to Bedlam! undone! replete with beauty!

Second GENT.

All trade is at an end.

Third GENT.

Jamaica is in danger.

SCANDAL.

The fourth and fifth acts are insupportable.

First GENT.

The state can never subsist if it goes on at this rate.

Third GENT.

If Spirits do not fall, the nation is undone.

Sir WILL.

I find in every country men willing to speak without even the expectation of a reply, but why should they be blamed, when most men converse rather with a desire of giving than receiving information?

C

FABRICE.

FABRICE returning.

Gentlemen, dinner is served, which I hope will be the most agreeable manner of ending this dispute. (To Sir WILL.) Sir, may I have the pleasure of expecting you?

Sir WILL.

Excuse me, I don't find myself disposed for conversation, I should chuse to dine in my own apartment. (*Exeunt all but Scandal, who continues writing, and Fabrice, who knocks at the door of Constantia's apartment.*)

SCENE IV. FABRICE and LUCY.

FABRICE.

Miss Lucy! Miss Lucy!

LUCY.

Your pleasure, Sir.

FABRICE.

I have come to entreat the favour of your company to dinner.

LUCY.

Alas, sir, my lady is so melancholy, that I am incapable of any other employment, but to sit down and share her affliction.

FABRICE.

But this will divert you; come, you must be chearful.

LUCY.

I cannot, indeed, be chearful, while I see her uneasy.

FABRICE.

FABRICE.

Then I must, and shall be permitted to send up dinner to your mistress's apartment. [*Exit.*]

SCANDAL, rising from the Table.

Monsieur Fabrice, I'll follow you instantly. How unkind is it, my dear Lucy, thus to refuse introducing me to your mistress. You know how much I admire the sex, and desire to serve them.

LUCY.

What presumption! Sure, sir, you seem ignorant of the lady whom you would thus insolently address.

SCANDAL.

She's a woman, and that's enough for me.

LUCY.

Yes; but such a woman, that you are scarce fit to be one of her servants.

SCANDAL.

Come then, my dear, I see you have a mind that you and I should be fellow-servants together.

LUCY.

Quite otherwise, I assure you.

SCANDAL.

What, both the mistress and the maid refuse me! why, my dear, so cruel?

LUCY.

For two very good reasons; because I think you very malicious, and very ugly,

SCANDAL.

And yet, I ought to expect more gentle treatment from the servant of a poor dependant wretch, who is supported by charity.

LUCY.

And who, good sir, informed you that my mistress was poor? Be assur'd that you have quite mistaken her circumstances. If she lives in a frugal manner, it is only because she hates luxury; if her dress be simple, it is only from inclination; if she be temperate, it is to prolong her health; none but the ignorant can despise her conduct.

SCANDAL.

Less vivacity, madam, if you please; I am no stranger to her conduct, I am acquainted with both her family and adventures.

LUCY.

What then do you know? What adventures of her's do you pretend to have heard?

SCANDAL.

I have correspondence every-where.

LUCY, *aside*.

Good heavens! perhaps this man may undo us. My dear, Mr. Scandal, if you are acquainted with any of our misfortunes, let me beseech you not to betray us.

SCANDAL.

Ay, now it is dear Mr. Scandal! you now find, and tremble at my power; yet, I will be secret upon one condition.

LUCY.

LUCY.
Name it,

SCANDAL.
That you love me.

LUCY.
Impossible.

SCANDAL.
Either love me, or fear me, you are sensible
that I know all.

LUCY.
Know then, we both despise you ; my lady is
as free from stain as you are dyed in villainy.
We are resigned to whatever may happen, and
malice will soon be incapable of making us un-
happy. [Exit.

SCANDAL.
Malice will soon be incapable of making them
unhappy ! As much as to say, they are both re-
solved on dying. They despise my efforts, by
which they intimate that I have it in my power
to hurt them. There must be some mystery in
all this. If it is possible I will be satisfied. [Exit.

SCENE V. CONSTANTIA, as from her
apartment, in a simple habit.

CONST.
My dear Lucy, what conference have you had
with that dangerous man ? When I consider that
Mr. Scandal and I are so frequently in the same
house, I cannot suppress my uneasiness. His cha-
racter is the worst that can be imagined. I am
told he desires to insinuate himself into every fa-
mily,

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mily, in order to make mischief, or to encrease it when it is there already. Were I not sensible how worthy the person is who owns the house, I should long since have left it.

LUCY.

You go indeed, madam, the ready way to leave not only the house, but the world.

CONST.

What can I do? Mr. Belmont has not been to visit us these two days.

LUCY.

But, I hope, madam, you do not intend to starve till he comes. I fancy a dinner might serve to comfort us during his absence.

CONST.

Lucy, if you love me, strive to conceal our miseries. I would have him, I would have the whole world strangers to them. We soon can learn to live upon bread and water; it is not poverty, but contempt, that is intolerable. I know what it is to want; but I would not have the world also know it.

LUCY.

Alas! my dear mistress, the world can readily perceive our wants in my face; as for you, you seem formed for opposing misfortunes; you seem supported by a peculiar greatness of soul: misery seems only to make you more beautiful; but, for me, I shall be soon wasted to a skeleton. Tho' it be not above a year since you first took me into your service in Scotland, yet I am altered almost out of my own remembrance.

CONST.

CONST.

We must neither lose courage nor hopes. My own disquietudes are trifling, compared to those I feel for your distress. Labour, however, my dear, shall serve to make our situation more easy. Let us be obliged to none. Take and sell this trifle I have been working these three days. (*Gives her a wrought handkerchief.*) It will be a pleasure to think I can support us both by my own single labour. Let us be industrious, my girl, for industry is the shortest road to virtue.

LUCY.

Let me kiss those charming hands that are thus able to support us. Believe me, my sweet mistress, I had rather live with you in the most afflicting indigence, than serve queens. O that I had it in my power, in the least, to lighten your afflictions!

CONST.

Were Mr. Belmont here. Yet I ought to hate him, since his father is the author of all my misfortunes. Belmont is a name that should ever be hateful to my ears. Yet, if young Belmont comes, at least, he shall never know my country, my situation, or my misfortunes.

LUCY.

And yet, madam, I must inform you, that Mr. Scandal pretends to have some knowledge of them.

CONST.

Impossible! how can he know, when even my Lucy is scarce instructed in the history of them. Besides,

Besides, I am as retired in my apartment as if I were laid in my tomb. I have no correspondence with my friends, nor make any new acquaintance. He pretends to know something, only because he desires to know. Be cautious, my Lucy, of letting him into the smallest circumstance; keep from him even the place of my birth. Yes, Lucy, behold in me the unfortunate child of an easy good-natured man, who too fondly following a deluded party, brought banishment on himself, and destruction on his family. Behold one who has now nothing left but fortitude and resolution. I have discovered these circumstances to you, but it would be a greater misery than any I yet have suffered, should you reveal them to any other.

LUCY.

To whom should I reveal them. I scarce ever leave your presence, and the world is generally very indifferent to the misfortunes of others.

CONST.

Indifferent the world may be; but then it is curious; all desire to hear of misfortunes, not to relieve the sufferer, but in order to grow more happy themselves by the comparison. I would at least, in my own person, endeavour to render poverty respectable. But let me proceed in my narration.

SCENE VI.

Enter FABRICE, with a napkin.

FABRICE.

Pardon me, madam,—my lady,—my respect deprives me of the power of address. I have
come

OR FAIR FUGITIVE. 17

come to ask your pleasure, if, madam, any thing below at dinner.—I am unable to express myself.

CONST.

Indeed, sir, your uneasiness gives me pain; speak freely, I know you are too kind to be capable of offending.

FAB.

Madam, perhaps my demand may be thought presumption, yet I fancied you did not dine yesterday; might I ask the reason?

CONST.

Want of appetite, sir, is sometimes unavoidable.

FAB.

I fear something more than want of appetite was the cause. You seem melancholy, madam. Probably your circumstances may not be altogether so great as your beauty.

CONST.

I hope, sir, you have never heard me complain of my fortune.

FAB.

Yet am I convinced, that it is neither so great nor so convenient as you deserve.

CONST.

I don't understand you.

FAB.

To be plain, madam, the world desires your company, and you seem to avoid it; it is true I am but a simple man, and one of the vulgar, yet

D

I can

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I can discern your merit as well as those who have been bred at courts. I am sensible that society, and greater indulgence, would improve your constitution, as well as your beauty. If you decline gayer company, there is at least an old gentleman above, with whom you may dine.

CONST.

What, sit down alone with a man, and a stranger!

FAB.

His age, madam, renders the most delicate apprehensions needless. You seem melancholy, so is he; perhaps uniting your sorrows will be some consolation.

CONST.

I cannot, will not see him.

FAB.

At least then, permit my wife to wait upon you. Suffer her to keep you company at dinner. Let me prevail.

CONST.

Your intended kindness has my gratitude, but cannot my acceptance, I have no occasion for it at present.

FAB.

You have no occasion for kindness, at a time that you want whatever it is in the power of kindness to bestow.

CONST.

Know, sir, you have been imposed upon,

FAB.

I ask pardon, madam.

CONST.

CONST.

You, sir, I can easily forgive. But there is one, who, I fancy, has forsaken me: it is now two o'clock, and yet Belmont has not come according to promise; but I have nothing to expect but disappointment.

FAB.

Mr. Belmont is one of the most virtuous men that frequents the court; I know him to be such: yet you still continue to receive him in the most forbidding manner, and always in company; I should have found a pleasure in providing any entertainment for him that you should desire. May I presume to ask, I suppose Mr. Belmont is a relation, madam?

CONST.

You forget yourself, sir.

FAB.

Lucy, your mistress is determined to command, and in all but this I am ready to obey her. I have even presumed to send up dinner, and have laid it in the antichamber that leads to her apartment.—But what lady have we got here, who enters the coffee-room with such a masculine air? She walks as if she were in a passion.

LUCY.

As I live, lady Alton, who was to be married to Mr. Belmont. I saw her the very day after the match was broken off; I am certain it is she.

CONST.

There are no hopes then of Mr. Belmont's re-

turn; I am conscious he still continues to regard her. She must prevail, my very fortune will make her happy. *[Exit.]*

S C E N E VIII.

Lady ALTON, hastily crossing the stage, and taking FABRICE by the arm.

Lady ALT.

Follow me, sir. A word with you.

FAB.

With me, madam!

Lady ALT.

Yes, with thee, wretch.

FAB.

What a tygresfs have we got here. *[Aside.]*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.



A C T II. S C E N E I.

Lady ALTON and FABRICE.

Lady ALT.

I Don't believe a syllable, good Mr. Coffee-man, of all you tell me; I'm in such a passion I am scarce myself.

FAB.

I hope, madam, when you have found yourself you'll believe what I tell you to be true.

Lady

Lady ALT.

You have the face to assure me that this adventurer is a woman of honour, tho' she has been convicted of receiving visits from a man of fortune. Sure thou hast lost all shame.

FAB.

And why so? Madam; when Mr. Belmont came hither, he never came in private, he was always receiv'd in company, the doors of her apartment open, my wife and her own maid in waiting. You may despise my condition, yet you should esteem my sincerity. And with respect to her whom you call an adventurer, you would equally esteem her, were you as well acquainted with her as I am.

Lady ALT.

Leave me, your company grows troublesome.

FAB. *Afide.*

Strange woman, sure fortune has made her great only to make her the more ridiculous.

(*Exit.*)

Lady ALTON knocking at the door of CONSTANTIA's apartment.

Lady ALT.

Fast lock'd; quite private; she must be now in company with her gallant.

SCENE

SCENE II.

CONSTANTIA and Lady ALTON.

CONST.

I could not have expected so much rudeness from a lady of your appearance. Any commands for me, madam?

Lady ALT.

Yes, madam. I'm informed that Mr. Belmont makes frequent visits here, and I would be assured from you if there be any foundation for such a report.

CONST.

I should be ready to answer, were I sensible of the motives which induce to this enquiry.

Lady ALT.

It is sufficient that I have the most weighty reasons for my demand, and be assured, that if you continue to flatter his passion, you may expect all the terrors of my just resentment.

CONST.

Your menaces would but serve to confirm my passion, if I had one for him.

Lady ALT.

I am no stranger to your affections; I am very well convinced you love him, and that your passion would lead you to insult me. But if revenge be in the power of woman, you shall feel mine.

CONST.

Since then, madam, you would force me to a confession, know that I love him.

Lady

Lady ALT.

To let you see then, the person on whom you have fix'd your affections, behold his letters to me in the warmest strain of tenderness. His picture too, which he presented when he offered me his heart.

CONST.

It is but too true, and I am indeed unhappy. Yes, I will learn to detest him.

Lady ALT.

Hold to that resolution, and I am your friend again. His inconstancy, his pride, his falsehood, are but the smallest blemishes in his character. He is——

CONST.

And yet, madam, I would not have him defamed; perhaps then, in pity, I should begin to defend and to love him. Sure you come but to shorten a life misfortunes have already made odious. Lucy, come and assist me to bear this unexpected stroke; I could have been calm on every occasion but this.

LUCY.

Dear madam, where is now that courage and constancy you boasted of but just now!

CONST.

Fortitude may assist us against indigence or injustice. I was enabled to oppose all the shafts of adversity, but this one alone; here I was off my guard, and I fear it is fatal. [Exeunt.]

SCENE

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SCENE III. Lady ALTON and SCANDAL.

Lady ALT.

What! betray'd, abandoned, and that for a trifling girl! I will not, cannot bear it. Mr. Scandal, you have often served me; have you endeavoured to assist me now? have you employed your correspondence in discovering this stranger, who has thus come between me and happiness.

SCANDAL.

I have obey'd your ladyship's directions; I have discovered that she is from Scotland, and that she endeavours to be conceal'd.

Lady ALT.

Vast discoveries truly!

SCAND.

These are all I have yet been able to make;

Lady ALT.

To what purpose then your search?

SCAND.

Small discoveries may lend a ray to guide us into greater. When politics are intricate, we leave it to time to discover how affairs may turn out; her matters being not ripe for an elucidation, we can only settle them in an hypothetical manner, by shrewd conjecture.

Lady ALT.

A truce, good sir, with your conjectures; they are most profound, I dare answer for it.

SCAND.

SCAND.

My suppositions are, that she is an enemy to the state.

Lady ALT.

What only supposition! Why, fellow, it is actually fact. She who attempts to rob me of my lover must certainly be a traitor to the state.

SCAND.

Besides, her endeavouring to be concealed looks very suspicious; or why should she act the recluse, if she had nothing to fear?

Lady ALT.

Though your conjectures carry no conviction, yet how happy should I be if they were true!

SCAND.

I'll answer for their certainty.

Lady ALT.

But will you stand to it before the proper judges? will you affirm it before those who are obliged to take cognizance of such business?

SCAND.

Undoubtedly! I have already connections among the great. It shall be first committed as a secret to a lady who is in keeping with a valet de chambre to the secretary of the first minister; I can divulge it, as a secret, that this lady has been sent up from Scotland with an evil intention, and as a spy; that she maintains a foreign correspondence; by thus raising a false report, I may draw on real consequences, and she may be placed in the very same prison from whence I have been so lately set free.

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Lady

Lady ALT.

Great passions, like mine, require desperate remedies ; I hate your half-bred villains, who go but a small way in pursuing vengeance. I am either for having every sail spread, or for shipwreck. Your suspicions are certainly just ; a person from Scotland, who, in a time of trouble, chuses to be concealed, is certainly an enemy to the state, and I must applaud, at least in this instance, your sagacity. I have under-rated your talents till now ; I find them fitted for higher stations than you have hitherto employed them in. You have already experienced my favours, and you shall soon receive greater. In the mean time, endeavour to observe what passes here, and give me a faithful account of all you see.

SCAND.

Madam, we must be busy, we must make the best of what we already know, and add something more of our own. Truth always stands in need of ornament ; and tho' lying be odious, yet fiction is a true poetical virtue. Yet, after all, what is truth ? why truly, the conformity of our ideas with what we speak. If so, there is nothing that can be called a lye, since our language always conforms to our intention.

Lady ALT.

No pupil of a French jesuit could have expressed it with more subtlety. But now repair to your station, and give me an exact account of what you see.

SCENE

SCENE IV. Lady ALTON and FABRICE.

Lady ALT.

There goes one of the greatest villains alive. A dog bites from an instinct of courage, but he from a diabolical passion of envy; I almost begin to hate that vengeance of which he is an instrument. I almost begin to take part with my very rival against him. Her pride, in the narrowness of her circumstances, pleases me much. She is modest, I'm told, beautiful; has good sense, but then she robs me of my lover; no, that I can never pardon. (*To Fabrice.*) Sir, I fear I have been rude, I beg you will impute my faults to the violence of my temper, not the baseness of my heart; I believe you deserve no reproach, your sincerity charms me; yet be convinced that you entertain a villain.

FAB.

Many, madam, have given me the same information; but tho' I am not so insincere as to make him welcome, yet I fear him too much to offer to offend. [*Exit.*]

SCENE V.

FREEPORT, dressed in a plain but decent manner,

FAB.

Mr. Freeport, already return'd! I am happy in seeing you. Well, and what in your last voyage! I hope your expectations are answered.

E 2

FREE-

FREEPORT.

Pretty well, sir ; I have acquired a large fortune, but have lost my former good-humour. Some coffee, boy, and one of the papers. I find more trouble in searching for amusement than riches.

FABRICE.

Would you see Mr. Scandal's periodical Entertainer.

FREEPORT.

By no means ; what, see a meer heap of absurdity. Should I be curious to see a spider traversing his web merely to live upon flies ? No, no, bring me the ordinary papers. Are there any new changes in the ministry, or new books written by men of reputed genius ?

FABRICE.

I can recollect none at present.

FREEPORT.

So much the better, the less news the less folly. But how do your own private affairs succeed, my friend ? Have you as much company at your house as usual ? Who are your lodgers at present ?

FABRICE.

I have an old gentleman who came this morning, but he chuses to be concealed.

FREEPORT.

Perhaps he's in the right on't ; three parts in four of mankind are either knaves or fools, and those that remain generally chuse to be retired.

FABRICE.

FABRICE.

Nay, he seems of another make from the rest of mankind; he refuses to see one of the most charming women in the world, that hires the next apartment to his.

FREEPORT.

There he is wrong. But who is this charming woman?

FABRICE.

Why, she is even more extraordinary than him. She has been now four months in my house without leaving her apartment. She goes by the name of Constantia; but this seems too like the names in romance to be her true one.

FREEPORT.

But by her lodging here she must be a lady of some distinction.

FABRICE.

There I own myself at a loss; but this I am certain of, that she is beautiful as an angel, haughty to excess, and yet extremely poor.

FREEPORT.

By your account she seems more absurd than even the old gentleman.

FABRICE.

Excuse me, sir, all her actions are attended with so much delicacy and good sense that even her faults are pleasing. Tho' she is in want of all the necessaries of life, yet she takes the greatest pains to conceal them. She labours with her hands to procure me the weekly rent of her apart-

apartments. Seldom complains, but seems to enjoy her griefs in solitude. I am obliged to use an hundred stratagems in order to supply her with the most trifling assistance. I charge her for provisions not at half the price they cost me. She sometimes discovers my design, and testifies the greatest displeasure at my conduct. In a word, she seems equally divided between misfortune, dignity, and virtue, and at different times has claimed my admiration, my pity, and my tears.

FREEPORT.

You may be furnish'd with one of those soft hearts, but for me, I am never moved, never admire; sometimes, indeed, I esteem. Apropos, as I am out of spirits, and want amusement for half an hour, what if you introduced me to this pretty stranger?

FABRICE.

O, sir, she receives no visits. One Mr. Belmont, a courtier, sometimes comes to pay her his respects; but she never receives him but in presence of my wife. He has not been here now for some time, and this seems to encrease her solitude and uneasiness.

FREEPORT.

My curiosity must be satisfied, I will see her, but with honour; prithee which is the apartment?

FABRICE.

That at the other end of the room.

FREE-

FREEPORT.

Shew me in then.

FABRICE.

I beg, sir, you'd consider.

FREEPORT.

Why, man, when I intend no harm what should I consider? Where is the fault of just going into a room? Bring me in my coffee and the papers there, my stay will be but short, business calls me at half an hour after two. (*He opens the door.*)

SCENE V.

CONSTANTIA seeming surprized. LUCY, FREEPORT, and FABRICE.

CONST.

Sir, I could not have expected such insolence from one of your appearance; the respect due to my sex, might, I thought, have guarded me from this intrusion.

FREEPORT.

No offence, madam. Fabrice, let my coffee be brought hither, I say.

FABRICE.

Yes, sir, if the lady permits.

FREEPORT, sits down at a table, reads the Gazette, first takes off his hat, and again puts it on, and now and then stares round on the company.

LUCY.

Quite familiar indeed.

FREE-

FREEPORT.

You see, madam, I am seated, why don't you sit ?

CONST.

Sir, your behaviour surprizes me ; I am not used to be treated thus. Sir, I never admit of visits from strangers.

FREEPORT.

I am by no means a stranger, I am very well known, I am called Freeport, the whole town knows my fortune and connections ; and if you doubt them, go to the Exchange and learn ; not the least a stranger, madam.

CONST.

You are at least utterly unknown to me ; and if what you represent yourself to be, I hope you will have too much humanity to make me uneasy by your presence.

FREEPORT.

I have no design in the world to make you uneasy. I am quite at my ease, and so may you, if you think proper, While I read the news, you may work at your needle. If you have a mind for coffee, here it is ; if not, why let it alone.

LUCY. *Aside.*

A perfect original.

CONST. *Aside.*

I shall be teiz'd to death with his company, I am surpriz'd why my good landlord permitted his

his intrusion. Is there no way to get rid of him?
I find he will have his way.

When she is seated, coffee is brought in, which
Freeport takes, without offering her any,
and as she continues to work, he continues
the discourse.

FREEPORT.

Harkee, young woman, I'm not fond of compliments, but I have heard a very good character of you; I am told you are virtuous, tho' poor; however, it is said you are proud also, and that I don't much like,

LUCY.

And who, good sir, has told you all this?

FREEPORT.

A very good-natured honest man, your landlord, said as much; and I would believe his word for my whole fortune.

CONST.

Sir, he has deceived you, not in regard to my pride, for that belongs to the sex; nor my virtue, for that is only my duty; but when he said I was poor, there he was mistaken. They who want nothing cannot be reproach'd with poverty.

FREEPORT.

You now tell me a falsehood, and that is even worse than pride. I know perfectly well that you want every necessary of life, and that frequently you are obliged to fast absolutely for want of a meal.

F

LUCY.

LUCY.

If physicians prescribe a proper regimen, they ought to be obey'd.

FREEPORT.

I don't know, mistress, that I have directed my discourse to you.

LUCY. *Aside.*

The oddest creature alive surely.

FREEPORT.

In a word, young woman, whether you are proud or not is nothing to me; I have just come from a voyage, in which I have cleared five thousand pounds; I have made it a rule to give the tenth part of all my acquisitions to those who may want it; I know no situation which claims it so much as yours; we can be both made happy by your acceptance. Take it, and by this means my debt is paid at once. I desire neither thanks nor gratitude; only keep the present and the secret. [*He lays a purse upon the table.*]

LUCY.

All he does increases my wonder.

CONSTANTIA rising.

CONST. *Aside.*

I have never in my life been so much amazed. Every accident only serves to make me more humble; his generosity is even equal to my confusion.

FREE-

FREEPORT continues to read the Gazette.

FREEPORT.

What an ideot this news writer! what absurdities delivered with solemnity! *His grace the duke of three stars has just gone down to the country.* And what is it to me whether he goes or stays!

CONSTANTIA approaching him.

CONST.

Sir.

FREEPORT.

Well, madam.

CONST.

Your actions surprize me more than even your conversation, but as to your generosity, I must be excused from accepting it; take it back, sir, with the sincerest thanks I can offer.

FREEPORT.

I don't understand you.

CONST.

I have a most perfect sense of your kind intentions; but tho' I admire your virtues, I must support my own; take my gratitude, it is all I have to give; but I am determined not to accept what you offer.

LUCY. *Apart.*

You seem an hundred times more singular even than he. Dear madam, in your present situation, abandoned by the whole world, are you so much an enemy to your own interest as to refuse the

assistance which Heaven sends you by one of the most extraordinary, yet most generous men upon earth?

FREEPORT.

You fib, you baggage, I'm no way extraordinary.

LUCY.

If you will not accept his present for your own use, at least take it for mine. I have served you in your distress, it is but just I should partake in your good fortune. Faith, sir, it is a folly to dissemble any longer, we are both in the deepest distress; and but for the friendship of our landlord, we might have died in want of the common necessities of life. My mistress has concealed her circumstances from those who were able to relieve her; you have compelled us to a confession of our circumstances, compel us also to partake of your bounty.

CONST.

You cover me with confusion.

LUCY.

It is an ill-placed shame.

CONST.

If you love me, don't reduce me to the necessity of abandoning my honour, in order to supply my necessities.

FREEPORT. *Still reading.*

A very good adventure truly.

LUCY.

LUCY.

If you love me, don't reduce us to necessity from a mistaken motive of honour.

CONST.

What would Belmont say, if his passion continues, should he hear that I was capable of so much meaness? I have always refused his most earnest services, and would you have me accept them from another, from a mere stranger?

LUCY.

If you were guilty of imprudence once, it should be no precedent for a repetition. You need be under no uneasiness of forfeiting Mr. Belmont's esteem; for that, alas, I fear is lost already.

CONST.

Let me beseech thee, girl, not to persist in this importunity; let us to the last preserve our dignity; let us endeavour civilly to dismiss this gentleman, who is ignorant of behaviour, and knows only how to give. Assure him, that when a woman accepts of such presents, they are always suspected to be at the expence of her virtue.

FREEPORT.

Did you address me, madam?

LUCY.

Yes, sir, she seems to have abandoned her usual share of understanding; she talks of suspicions, and I know not what.

FREE-

FREEPORT.

Prithee, what does she suspect?

LUCY.

She fancies some design carried on under the appearance of generosity.

FREEPORT.

Tell her then that she is a fool. How can she suspect me of baseness, while I am only doing my duty?

LUCY.

You hear him, madam.

CONST.

Yes, I hear, and I admire him; but am determined in my refusal: tho' his generosity may be disinterested, yet slander will have a tongue, and the loss even of reputation is almost as bad as having deserved to lose it.

FREEPORT.

As for reputation, you need be under no apprehensions in that respect. I don't know you, and it is possible I may never desire it. If by chance I should like you some half a dozen years hence, and you like me, why so much the better for us both; as you behave, so shall I. If you find my company disagreeable, I shall find yours insupportable; if you desire to see me no more, why, I'll never return; if you would see me again, if I think fit, I may possibly return again; so, madam, for the present, I'm your humble
servant.

servant. I have some business that calls me away, and when I shall come back is more than I know.

CONST.

Adieu, sir, take with you my gratitude, my admiration, but particularly take your profered generosity; nor continue thus to cover me with confusion, by forcing it on me.

FREEPORT.

The woman is actually silly.

CONST.

I must be under a necessity of sending it after you then, sir. Mr. Fabrice, your company, sir, for a moment.

Enter FABRICE.

FABRICE.

Your will, madam.

CONST.

Take this purse which the gentleman has left by mistake, and return it to him. Assure him of my esteem; but never let me owe favours of so low a nature to any.

FABRICE.

Ah, Mr. Freeport, this generosity is truly your own. Yet, even tho' she continues to refuse it, be assured that it could not have been offered to those who wanted it more.

I

CONST.

CONST.

And you too, sir, have you engaged in this plot to betray me ?

FABRICE.

Pardon me, madam, I see you will be obeyed. (*Apart to Freeport.*) I shall take a proper care of your present, and furnish her with all that she may happen to have occasion for. Every moment encreases my pity and respect.

FREEPORT.

I feel somewhat like pity myself, but then her pride helps to lessen the impression. However, pride is a fault, and caution her against it.

[Exit.

S C E N E VI.

CONSTANTIA and LUCY.

LUCY.

You have behaved in a fine manner indeed. Heaven kindly sends a friend to your assistance, and yet you persist in refusing the profered favour. But tho' you could feel no pity for yourself, at least your poor humble friend might claim some tenderness. Must I too be the victim of your misplaced virtues, of sentiments of honour, where vanity, perhaps, is the strongest ingredient !

CONST.

Had I any means of making an excuse, I would ; but be assured of this, that every favour we receive

ceive sinks us in the eye of the world. Were I in Belmont's esteem, I should then, indeed, be happy; but he, I fear, abandons me; he loved my rival, he loves her still; and I am to be undone. Yet, why did I give him up my heart? was it to encrease my afflictions, that I suffered myself to be persuaded by his flatteries? I cannot bear this suspense, I will, I must be informed. *(She sits down to write.)*

LUCY.

I never saw my mistress so much moved before; and yet she has reason; her situation is even worse than mine. A servant has always some resource in misfortunes; but they who are above their circumstances, have none.

CONST. *Having folded her letter.*

At least, this may reach him, tho' my sighs and complaints cannot.

LUCY.

But, madam, have you never come to an explanation with him? He may indeed have forsaken you; but when he knows your family, your fortune, perhaps these may move him.

CONST.

I find an explanation, my dear Lucy, impossible; how can I discover myself to him, the son of our enemy, the son of a man who has undone my father, and made me wretched?

G

LUCY,

LUCY.

And is your lover, madam, the son of your father's enemy!

CONST.

He is. Our families, from motives of state, have ever been irreconcilable; they have opposed each other upon every occasion, but his at length became victorious, and mine was undone. Without father, mother, fortune, you see me a poor outcast; yet, poor as I am, still in love, and pleased with ruin. Education and resentment bids me hate young Belmont, yet still I love him, still harbour his dear image next my heart; nor can I tear it away with all my resolution.

LUCY.

Dear madam, suppress your agonies. You look pale methinks, and now, now, she falls, (*Constantia falls.*) Sir, Mr. Fabrice, is no body near! no help! my poor mistress!

Enter FABRICE.

FABRICE.

Wife! maid! where are you all? fly! bring help! undone! but she recovers.

CONST. *Recovering.*

I thank you, sir, and you, madam, yet death were preferable to such a life as mine; prithee lead me where I may learn to forget my friends and my misfortunes together.

(*She is supported out.*)

SCENE

SCENE VII.

Sir WILLIAM WOODVILLE and FABRICE.

Sir WILL.

You called for assistance ; can I serve you sir ?

FAB.

Sir, the lady I spoke to you of has just fainted, but is now pretty well recovered.

Sir WILL.

Qualms, mere qualms. Such are but trifles among the sex, they come and go at pleasure ; but by your manner of calling for help, I had fancied the house was on fire.

FAB.

I would as lief see it on fire, as that young lady suffer. If Scotland produces many such fine women as her, it must needs be a charming country.

Sir WILL.

Is she from Scotland ?

FAB.

Yes, sir. Tho' it is but this very day I became acquainted with that particular ; Mr. Scandal, who knows all the world, tells me so.

Sir WILL.

And her name, sir ?

G 2

FAB.

FAB.

She is called Constantia.

Sir WILL.

I am a stranger to the family. (*Walks about talking to himself.*) Never is the name of my country mentioned, that it does not strike daggers to my heart. O, I have been driven from it, basely driven from it! Had I but justice done me, it would be found, that I never offered to offend my country, or disturb its peace. Yet the remains of that family, which has contrived my ruin, still owes me justice or revenge. My wife! my children! have I lost you for ever? to suffer life, tho' not one hope survives, to love mankind with all the world my enemy. It must not be! and yet, to die without revenge were baseness; no, I will support this detested load till I can throw it off with honour.

FABRICE, coming from the door of CONSTANTIA's apartment.

All is well; she is quite recovered.

Sir WILL.

The affairs of this life are ever changing; some happy accident may effect my hopes.

FAB.

No great change, sir, only a little pale or so; but not a bit less beautiful.

Sir WILL.

Something must be done, and that *speedily*; one noble blow, and then! It shall be so. [*Exit.*

FAB.

FAB.

He seems to be under no great uneasiness for ladies that faint ; yet, had he seen Constantia, old as he is, he might not be so indifferent.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.



ACT III. SCENE I.

Lady ALTON. A Servant waiting.

Lady ALT.

YES, since I cannot find the ungrateful man at home, I am resolved to see him here. The advice was properly given, and as wisely received : a woman, a stranger from Scotland, who endeavours to be concealed, can be frightened into any submissions ; we must threaten her as a conspirator against the state ; she shall be secured, the order is already given. But this must be Belmont's servant ; you have a letter, friend, I presume, for a lady who lodges here.

SERV.

Yes, madam.

Lady ALT.

That letter is for me.

SERV.

SERV.

I fancy not, madam.

Lady ALT.

Let me see, without a superscription, is it not?

SERV.

It is, please your ladyship.

Lady ALT.

Then who can it be for but me. Mr. Belmont has sent me several, which you may see; but, to clear your eyesight, see here, ten guineas, which may serve to confirm what I say.

SERV.

Faith, I begin to think your ladyship has reason; yet, to say the truth, I was ordered to present it to a lady here, called Constantia, that he is always talking about, and loves immensely. But there can be no harm in giving a letter to one lady instead of another, for he then may have the comfort of taking his choice.

(Gives the letter, and exit.)

Lady ALT. reading the letter.

Thou dearest object upon earth, my virtuous, my respected Constantia, (that is more than I have ever yet had from him) the few days I have been obliged to be absent seem an age; but impute my seeming neglect to my real assiduity. I have been informed of your family and fortune, and will retrieve both, or fall in the attempt. I have friends that are
power-

powerful; and for me, be assured, that my too great earnestness may be a greater impediment to your success than my neglect.

BELMONT.

Now the whole is discovered, plain, beyond a doubt, a downright conspiracy. He loves her, she stands in need of succour; thus are they both to serve each other, yet it shall not be if I have love, if I have invention, if I have woman in me, I'll part them, and that quickly too.

SCENE II.

Lady ALTON and LUCY.

Lady ALTON, to LUCY, crossing the stage,

Inform your mistress that I would speak to her; assure her that I have the most agreeable news to impart, and that I expect her instantly. Do you hear, my dear, instantly! and don't be afraid, child.

LUCY.

Afraid, madam, not in the least; but you look so, that I can't avoid trembling a little.

[Exit.

Lady ALT.

We shall soon see whether my propositions will succeed; if not, I have still a surer resource remaining.

Enter CONSTANTIA, supported by LUCY.

CONST.

I hope, madam, you do not come a second time to insult my misfortunes.

Lady

Lady ALT.

So far from it that I come to make you happy, my dear ; I am sensible of your want of fortune, and you know the greatness of mine ; take a part of those riches I can well spare. I have a charming retreat upon the borders of Scotland, where you may enjoy solitude, and indulge melancholy, that, and all the lands about it, shall be yours. I'll resign over all my title in it, only upon condition that you give up all your pretensions to Mr. Belmont, and that you conceal your retreat.

CONST.

You need not fear, madam, my power over him ; he has already abandoned me, I'm but a feeble rival, and should give you scarce a moment's jealousy. Your offer of a retreat is kind, but I hope soon to have one in the grave, where only I can expect repose.

Lady ALT.

And is this the only return for my profered kindness ; rash woman !

CONST.

We should avoid rashness, but fortitude is a duty. And give me leave, madam, to say, that my family is as good as yours ; my heart, perhaps, is better ; and as for my fortune, I'm resolved it shall never depend upon any, but particularly not upon my rival. [Exit.

Lady

Lady ALT.

And yet it shall depend upon me. I would not willingly have been reduced to this extremity. Besides, the instruments I employ are so base; but yet, when necessity compels, she must, by some means or other, feel and acknowledge my power.

SCENE III.

FREEPORT and Sir WILLIAM are seen at one end of the Coffee-room, FABRICE and Lady ALTON at another.

Lady ALT.

You often see me at your house, monsieur Fabrice; but I impute the fault wholly to you.

FAB.

Madam, I should be sorry—

Lady ALT.

No excuses, sir, I'm determined to frequent it, till I am satisfied whether it deserves the reputation it has had of harbouring none but persons of approved morals and integrity. I go therefore, but depend on it, soon to return. [*Exit.*]

FAB.

So much the worse. But what can be her business here; here where she meets none that resemble herself, where she sees a woman whose behaviour is always a tacit reproach upon hers.

H

FREE-

FREEPORT and Sir WILLIAM come forward.

Sir WILL.

Beauty, modesty, what are they to me? I have other troubles to think of.

FREEPORT.

And yet such beauty often gives the most sensible pleasure. I spend a great part of my time upon the Exchange, endeavour to get rid of trifling passions, and yet sometimes I feel like the weakest of them all. But this young woman sticks closer to my heart than I thought was possible; what wisdom, modesty, and spirit in all she says. I'm determined to see her again, even tho' her pride should insult me.

Sir WILL.

I'm informed by our host that you have dealt very nobly by her.

FREEPORT.

A trifle, à trifle, would not you have done the same if in my place?

Sir WILL.

Probably I might if I had been as rich as you, and if she merited my favour.

FREEPORT.

Where then is the greatness of my behaviour, *(He takes up a news paper.)* Let's see what is to be found in the papers of the day. Hum, hum, lord Falconbridge is dead.

Sir

Sir WILL.

Lord Falconbridge dead ! Misfortune on misfortune, he was the only friend I had remaining, the only anchor I had to trust to. Will fortune never, never cease her persecutions ?

FREEPORT.

If he was your friend I'm sorry he's gone. *Edinburgh, April 14.* Search is every-where making for Sir William Woodville, who has been condemned since the eleventh.

Sir WILL.

Heavens, what do I hear ? Sir William Woodville condemned !

FREEPORT.

There is the paper, you may see it with your own eyes, if you think proper; but you may depend on the goodness of mine.

Sir WILL. After having read this paragraph indolently.

Ay, 'tis true enough. (*Aside.*) I must quit this house, it is too public. Is it possible for earth and hell conspired to lay more misfortunes upon the head of one poor wretch than now oppress mine ? (*To his servant in an anti-chamber adjoining.*) Let our horses be ready saddled, and let us set off, if possible, at night-fall.—Bad news flies faster even than the storm.

FRERPORT.

Why, what is there more natural than all this? What is it to the world whether sir William Woodville carries his head or no? An head is cut off to day; it is published the day following in the Gazette; and the succeeding day it is quite forgotten. Did I not expect to meet some haughty treatment, I would incontinently go sit a while with Constantia. Modesty and beauty are always agreeable companions, even tho' their possessor be silent.

S C E N E IV.

To them a person disguised as a MESSENGER of STATE.

MESSEN.

Is your name, sir, Fabrice?

FAB.

Yes, sir.

MESSEN.

You keep a coffee-house, and let apartments?

FAB.

I do.

MESSEN.

You have now in your house a young lady from Scotland, whose name is Constantia Wellfort.

FAB.

Sir, I have the happiness of entertaining such a lady.

FREE-

FREEPORT.

A lady of beauty and modesty, as I can prove by experience.

MESSEN.

I have orders from the government, here they are, to secure her person.

FAB.

Heavens, what a blow!

Sir WILL. *Aside.*

A young lady from Scotland arrested, and on the very day of my arrival too! What if my daughter should be in the same unfortunate circumstances? How all my family rises to my mind upon this ungrateful occasion. Perhaps my poor child is now a victim to my former misconduct; perhaps, now deserted of every friend, she begs her bread at the grudging doors of the rich; perhaps she languishes in prison, and with hunger feels all the severity of the season. Why was she or I born, if to be thus unhappy!

FREEPORT.

Where have we ever seen girls arrested for state crimes? I fear there is something wrong in this affair.

FAB.

Should she be absolutely a spy, the credit of my house is gone for ever. I now perceive lady Alton had meaning in what I only imputed to the fury of her resentment. And yet, I cannot be persuaded

54 THE COFFEE-HOUSE,

persuaded to believe any thing to the young lady's disadvantage.

MESSEN.

As for your belief, friend, that is nothing to me; I must do my duty, she must either find bail, or to prison.

FAB.

I'll bail her this moment. My house, my goods, my person.

MESSEN.

Your person is not worth my taking; the house is probably none of your own; and as for your goods, friend, I'm no broker. There must be money; we must have money.

FREEPORT.

Mr. officer, if five hundred guineas, a thousand, or two thousand, will do, I am ready to deposit the sum this moment. My name's Freeport, I'll answer for the lady's integrity, loyalty, and honour; I wish I could say as much for her humility.

MESSEN.

Come then, sir, I take you at your word.

FREEPORT.

Very willingly.

FAB.

Where can we find men willing to lay out their money in this manner.

FREE-

FREEPORT.

In employing money to do our fellow creatures service, is laying it out at the most exorbitant interest. (*Freeport and the messenger retire in order to settle the contract.*)

SCENE V.

Sir WILLIAM and FABRICE.

FAB.

Perhaps, sir, you are surpriz'd at the behaviour of Mr. Freeport. But it is his manner. Happy they for whom he at once conceives a friendship. He's a man of few words; but he does good in less time than others make protestations.

Sir WILL.

Some men are particularly formed to generosity, (*aside*) yet among the number where have I ever found one.

FAB.

Let us at least conceal the danger from the young lady herself; it would perhaps disturb her too much.

Sir WILL. *Aside.*

It is impossible to continue concealed from danger; my disturbance will discover me.

FAB.

We should never inform any of their danger, until it is over.

Sir

Sir WILL. *Aside.*

The only friend I had in London is dead,
what then do I do here?

FAB.

I perceive, fir, you are disposed to be alone;
I know my duty too well to interrupt while I
mean to amuse. [Exit.

SCENE VI.

Sir WILLIAM alone.

Sir WILL.

A young lady from Scotland arrested! Her
fortune and friends unknown! Her life recluse
to a wonder! I know not how, but this awakens
a train of thinking that I cannot suppress. All
my former connections, my subsequent calamities,
rise to my imagination, and exasperate my
soul even to madness.

LUCY, crossing the stage.

Sir WILL.

Pardon a stranger's rudeness, madam, but inform
me if you are the young lady from Scotland,
of whose beauty I have heard so much?

LUCY.

Probably, fir, I may; I am young, as you see
me, I am from Scotland too; and as for beauty,
I have received some compliments even for the
little I have.

Sir

Sir WILL.

Have you lately heard any thing new from that country?

LUCY.

No, sir, I have quitted it so long, that I forget it, and am forgotten.

Sir WILL.

Pray, of what family are you?

LUCY.

My father, sir, was a baker, and my mother waited on a lady of quality.

Sir WILL.

I fancy, young woman, I mistake, your wait upon a young lady of distinction here, do you not?

LUCY.

I have that honour, sir.

Sir WILL.

Without doubt you know your mistress.

LUCY.

Yes, sir, I know her to be one of the most patient, gentle, charming mistresses in the world, the most civil to her inferiors, and the most courageous under adversity.

Sir WILL.

She has had misfortunes then?

LUCY.

We have both had them. And yet I had rather serve her than be happy with another.

Sir WILL.

But I would be informed, whether you know her family?

I

LUCY

LUCY.

Sir, my mistress chuses to be concealed; she is of no family. I don't understand what you mean by all these questions.

SIR WILL. *Aside.*

That circumstance of her being concealed still comes across me,—Would heaven but permit me once more to find—but O vain hopes! it is impossible.—Prithee inform me, of what age is your mistress?

LUCY.

I fancy there's no harm in discovering that particular. But she is much wiser than she is old. She is now eighteen, and yet is capable of instructing people of forty.

SIR WILL.

Eighteen! Alas, that was exactly the age of my unhappy daughter, the only child of my age; the only hopes of my family, whom those aged arms have so often embraced with all the fondness of paternal expectation. Exactly eighteen, you say.

LUCY.

Exactly. And I am twenty-two, but a small difference between us. But I hope, sir, you are not going to cast our nativities, you make so many questions about our age.

SIR WILL.

Eighteen years old, and born in Scotland, and affecting retirement. My curiosity must have

have way. With your permission, I must see her, and speak to her for a few minutes.

LUCY.

Sure this age of eighteen has set the old gentleman beside himself. Sir, it is impossible to see at present, she is in such affliction.

SIR WILL.

That very circumstance adds wings to my impatience.

LUCY.

A new misfortune has just touch'd her nearly. And yet none are able to bear with more constancy than she. She is yet scarce recovered, and I must entreat, sir, you will not interrupt the short repose she is now enjoying.

SIR WILL.

Every word you say but serves to augment my curiosity. I am at least her countryman; I shall share her sorrows, perhaps I may lessen them; permit me then, before I leave town, to see this young lady, tho' but for a moment, let me see her.

LUCY.

Sir, you have prevail'd, your being my countryman is sufficient to recommend you. Wait but a few minutes. I'll acquaint her with your desire, and, if she approves the request, will immediately return, and introduce you.

SCENE

SCENE VIII.

Sir WILLIAM, FABRICE.

FAB.

Are we alone, sir?

Sir WILL. *Apart.*

With what impatience do I expect her return?

FAB.

Can we be over-heard, think you?

Sir WILL. *Apart.*

I am scarcely equal to this rapid vicissitude of passion.

FAB.

Sir, you are sought after.

Sir WILL.

What do you say? how! when! where!

FAB.

Sir, you are sought after; and as I have a regard for all those who lodge at my house, I thought proper to apprize you of the danger. I don't know who you are, but here come fellows who ask me several suspicious questions. The house looks as it were beset, and for aught I can see, you may soon have such a visitor as the young lady might have had an hour ago, but for Mr. Freeport's generosity.

Sir WILL.

I am ready to depart; but still I am determined to see my fair country-woman.

FAB.

FAB.

Faith, sir, I believe, for both our sakes, the sooner the better; it is very possible you may not find as many friends to assist you in trouble as the young lady.

Sir WILL.

I know it; age and infirmities will serve to banish old friends, but will never attract new ones. But for this young lady, tho' danger threatens, tho' prudence persuades, yet am I resolved to see her; I'm resolved to satisfy a passion, which you, perhaps, may accuse of folly; but arises from a noble, tho' a concealed motive: favour me with your company into a place of greater privacy, and then you shall know more.

FAB.

I was convinced you could not be easy without seeing her, and indeed she deserves your curiosity.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.



ACT IV. SCENE I.

FABRICE and SCANDAL at a table in the Coffee-room, FREERPORT smoking his pipe, and reading.

FAB.

INDEED Mr. Scandal, if report be true, I must confess I should be better pleased with your absence than your company.

SCAND.

SCAND.

Report is ever a liar, but what particularly offends you at present, sir?

FAB.

Sir, you frequent my house in order to dissipate your ill nature, and and I shall soon have it reported that I keep a shop for selling poisons.

FREEPORT.

Selling of poisons, sir; think of that,

FAB.

As it is said, you behave like an enemy to all the world.

FREEPORT.

You hear the accusation, Mr. Scandal?

FAB.

It is even said that you are an informer, a deceiver; I scarce can believe all the bad accounts I hear of you.

FREEPORT.

Sir, this is beyond raillery. How do you answer such imputations?

SCAND.

Are these reproaches just, Mr. Fabrice, to a man of letters; of taste?

FAB.

Sir, whether you have taste or no, I'm sure your company does me an injury.

SCAND.

Ingratitude! black ingratitude! Was it not I who first brought your house into reputation, who first turn'd the tide of fashion in your favour?

your? Was it not my reputation which brought so much company?

FAB.

A fine reputation, truly. You have indeed, sir, a very flagrant reputation; you are tolerably known in the world I assure you, sir; we are no strangers to your labours also.

SCAND.

Sir, sir, attack my morals as you will, but spare my labours: they may at least have the privilege of being exempted from censure.

FAB.

I have no other connections but with the man, and him I have reason to suspect as a base informer. It is even reported that you have endeavoured to undo the beautiful Constantia.

FREEPORT.

If I thought so, I would knock him down in a moment, tho' I hate quarrelling.

FAB.

It is said that you have discovered her being from Scotland; nay, that you have carried your informations even against the old gentleman, of whom I am certain you have no knowledge.

SCAND.

And pray, sir, where's the harm of being born in Scotland?

FAB.

It is said you have had several conferences with the angry lady, who sometimes does us the honour of a visit; nay, even with Mr. Belmont, who

who seldom comes; and that you endeavour to do us all the prejudice in your power.

FREEPORT.

If such a character be possible, I should detest the human species.

FAB.

Yet heavens, what do I see! Our courtier at last come to pay us a visit. I'm in raptures.

FREEPORT.

A courtier! I hate the court and all that belongs to it; I hate both them and every scoundrel who prostitutes his conscience for hire.

FAB.

Ay, but this gentleman is a patriot, and consequently of no party.

FREEPORT.

Whatever he be, if he belongs to the court I hate him. I don't care for company, in which I am to be on my guard. I shall return soon, however, for this young stranger runs unaccountably in my head. I should chuse a private conversation with her. Assure her of my esteem; and that she employs my most serious meditations.

SCENE II.

BELMONT with a melancholy air, SCANDAL saluting him without being noticed. FABRICE waiting at a distance.

BELMONT. To FABRICE.

I am glad sir, to see you; your fair ward, I hope too she is well.

FAB.

FAB.

Your absence, sir, has discompos'd her a little; but she at present is somewhat better.

BELMONT.

Thou providence, the protector of innocence, that hast supply'd her with virtue, supply her also with happiness! every account I hear from her promises me a favourable access; I should be pleas'd if you announc'd my arrival, in the mean time, permit me a word or two in private with this gentleman. *(Pointing to Scandal.)*

SCANDAL. TO FABRICE.

You now, sir, see my influence among the great, and that my merit is known beyond the precincts of your coffee-room.

BELMONT. TO SCANDAL.

Sir, if you please.

SCAND.

You do me too much honour, my lord, if a trifling dedication of mine can be an equivalent for such unmerited distinction.

BELMONT.

Sir, that is not my business at present. It is for favours of another nature that I owe you my thanks. From you my servants have been informed of the arrival of the old stranger from Scotland; you have described him not only to them, but to those whose duty it was to apprehend him.

K

SCAND.

SCAND.

And in that I hope, sir, I did but my duty.

BELMONT.

You have indeed served me without intending it. Your design might have been bad, but it has been attended with happy effects. Take this as a reward, not of what you designed, but of what has been effected. (*Giving money.*) But let this also bind you to secrecy; for if ever I again hear you but mention either of the two persons whom you have endeavoured to betray, depend upon my severest resentment.

SCAND.

If the world thus continues to reward, I'll give them leave to revile me. [*Exit.*]

S C E N E III.

BELMONT alone.

An old gentleman arrived incognito from Scotland; Constantia born in the same country. Alas, if it were possible to repair the injustice of my father! Would providence but offer the opportunity, with what pleasure would I embrace it! (*To Lucy, crossing the stage.*) Have you not been surpriz'd, my dear, at my absence of late? I could never be pardoned if those precious minutes were not employed in attempting to serve my dear Constantia. There was a request which I was to ask the ministry in her favour, and I was obliged to follow them down to Windsor for this purpose.

OR FAIR FUGITIVE. 67

purpose. She, I hope, may yet be happy, and to you will she owe a part of it, for having informed me of her family and fortune.

LUCY.

And yet, sir, I have in this acted contrary to her express directions, and should she ever hear of this trifling piece of infidelity, I tremble at what might be the consequences of her resentment. Indeed, sir, your absence gave her great uneasiness, I should have been uneasy myself too, if I did not reserve all my spirits to comfort her.

BELMONT.

These are my thanks for your courage and fidelity.

(Gives money.)

LUCY.

And thus, sir, to the ground I thank you: My mistress, indeed, may refuse kind offers of this nature, but for us poor servants, we ought to accept the good as we are often obliged to take up with the bad, thankfully. She may be in love with poverty; but for my part, I ever had a natural aversion to starving.

BELMONT.

Heavens! and is Constantia in distress? Unhappy me, why did you not tell me of this before? I'm almost guilty in my own eyes for not having forced the secret from her. But my fault shall be instantly corrected.

68 THE COFFEE-HOUSE,

LUCY.

In this instance alone I believe she could conceal her heart from Mr. Belmont.

BELMONT.

We wait too long; let me, let me fly to the lovely mourner's assistance.

LUCY.

Patience, sir, for a little. She is in company with an old, a very old gentleman, who has come from her part of the country; and they weep together, and speak and behave with such tenderness.

BELMONT.

Probably the man on earth I desire to serve. Tell me, child, what conversation passed between them while you were by?

LUCY.

At first they were silent; look'd at each other for some time in mute astonishment; at last, the old man sitting down, desired that I might withdraw.

SCENE IV.

Lady ALTON, BELMONT, and LUCY.

Lady ALT.

At length, perfidious man, thou art found. What evasion, what subterfuge now left to cover your inconstancy, or your ingratitude?

BEL-

BELMONT.

The innocent, madam, have need of none.
(*Aside.*) What an unexpected interview!

Lady ALT.

Monster! villain!

BELMONT.

I may appear a monster in your eyes; nor am I uneasy at being thought so; but for villainy I disclaim it, that is the very reverse of my character. Before I gave up my heart to another, did I not plainly declare that I loved you no longer?

Lady ALT.

This to my face, thou impudence; where then are all your promises of marriage, your oaths, your assiduity, your love?

BELMONT.

Faith, madam, when I swore I loved, I fancy I might have been sincere; nay, I was even sincere when I promised to marry.

Lady ALT.

And what then opposed the execution of that promise?

BELMONT.

Your character, your over-bearing passions; I must own I had not so great a respect for your happiness, as by marrying to put an end to my own.

Lady

Lady ALT.

But to be forsaken for a vagabond, a profligate.

BELMONT.

On the contrary I quit you, to take modesty, virtue, and every grace.

Lady ALT.

You think, sir, by all this, to escape my resentment; but know that I still have a head to conceive, and an hand to execute, vengeance.

BELMONT.

I am no stranger either to your head or your heart; I know you to be vindictive in your nature, envious rather than jealous; that your desires are violent, but not lasting; but still I am sensible you will at last have virtue to applaud my choice.

Lady ALT.

Go thou mean-mercenary wretch, I know the present object of your affection even better than you do. I am acquainted with her family too, with her father, with every circumstance, and you will soon see that my friends are more capable of satisfying my resentment, than yours of pardoning their offences.

BELMONT.

Perhaps, madam, I was too rash; but if a proper submission might ward off a blow, the very apprehension of which fills me with horror.

LUCY.

OR FAIR FUGITIVE. 71

LUCY.

Dear sir, strive to soften her; my very fears will kill me else.

BELMONT.

Stay, madam, name your conditions, but one word, let me be heard.—

Lady ALT.

Away, I'll neither hear thee nor answer thee. Thou art every way hateful to me, base, perfidious, ungrateful, and thy person even more detestably shocking than thy mind. [Exit.

SCENE V.

BELMONT and LUCY.

BELMONT.

What can this enraged woman intend? I know her passions have no bounds. Jealousy prompts her forward, and adds virulence to her natural ill-nature. Yet, can she deprive me of my dear Constantia? can she still encrease her sorrows? The old stranger too must share her resentment; yet, perhaps, such threats are but the empty wish of inclination, without power.

LUCY.

Alas, sir, it was but some minutes ago that an officer, who pretended to have received his orders from the ministry, came to take away my mistress, and would have certainly effected his design, but for a good gentleman, who promised
to

to answer for our appearance, and who bought the officer off with a large sum of money. I was sworn to secrecy, but I can keep nothing secret to you.

BELMONT.

Unaccountable this conduct ! To seize a woman, it cannot be. We must know more of this. My family has long done hers all the injuries possible. I must now endeavour to clear off the long arrear ; fortune, love, justice, and reason, persuade me to it. I will oppose her most powerful enemies, and bring her off safe, or fall in the attempt. Don't alarm your mistress with her situation. I'll fly to the ministry, and represent the case of her and her father. I'll forego the pleasure of seeing her for that of serving her. Inform her that absence does not impair my ardour, but the greater my distance, I only drag a greater length of chain. *[Exit.]*

LUCY.

What a strange variety of incidents ! I see that this life is but one continual struggle of the good against the bad ; happy were virtue always triumphant.

SCENE VI.

Sir WILLIAM and CONSTANTIA.

Sir WILL.

Every thing you tell me awakes recollection. You were born, you say, in one of the northern pro-

provinces, and lost your father and your fortune by a civil war. Your courage and wisdom amaze me, and seem, madam, no way suited to the wretchedness of your fortune.

CONST.

Perhaps, sir, to that very wretchedness it is that I owe that wisdom and courage you are pleased to commend. Probably had I been educated in all the elegance and softness of fortune, that mind which is now fortified by misery, would then be the indolent inhabitant of a worthless person.

Sir WILL.

O thou worthy of the most happy fortune, repeat again the story of your woes! Is the name of your father or family too a secret?

CONST.

The duty I owe my father imposes silence. He is now condemned and sought for; even naming him to my dearest friend might be attended with danger. Tho' I have, from your appearance, conceived the highest esteem for you, tho' you inspire me with duty and respect, yet you are still a stranger: a word may undo him; and you have too much good sense to condemn my caution.

Sir WILL.

Yet one word may probably make the happiness of my life. At least, inform me, at what age did cruel fortune separate you from your unhappy father.

L

CONST.

CONST.

I was then but five.

Sir WILL.

Good heavens! What a resemblance in every circumstance with my misfortunes! Every word darts like a ray upon my darkened soul; would Providence but thus continue the pleasing delusion.

CONST.

You weep, sir, and yet am I still at a loss for the motives either of your concern or curiosity.

Sir WILL.

Proceed, I entreat you. When your father left his family, never to return, how long did you remain with your mother?

CONST.

I was ten years old when she died in my arms, oppressed with famine and sorrow; and my brother was soon after killed in battle.

Sir WILL.

O happy moments! charming discovery! unhappy wife! gallant boy! behold this picture; tell me, tell me, my girl, do you recollect those features?

CONST.

What do I see! Or do I dream! My own mother's exact resemblance. Let my tears fall on it, O let me take it to my bosom, my heart!

Sir

CONST.

I

Sir WILL.

Yes, Constantia, it is, it is your mother; and in me behold that wretched father who has been the cause of all your misfortunes; this the breast which has so often felt for your misery. O, my child! let me hold thee ever here.

CONST.

Thus, falling on my knees, let me first offer up my thanks to Heaven; this indeed it is to be happy. My pappa! my pappa! And may I call you so? And have I at last found thee? Yet how have you ventured here among a world of enemies, men unknowing pity, who seek your life. I tremble for your safety the moment I have the pleasure of seeing you.

Sir WILL.

My dearest child, you know all the misfortunes of our family; you know the inveteracy of the house of Belmont against ours. My whole fortune has been confiscated, and even I hardly escaped with life. I had still, however, one friend remaining, who might have had interest enough to raise me from the abyss in which misfortune had plunged me. But he, to complete my calamities, is lately dead. I have been condemned to die; I am sought for by my enemies, am weary of this repining precarious being, yet would not willingly leave the world till I have done my self justice. The laws refuse to assist me; I am a poor desolate being, willing to fall,

L 2

yet

yet desirous of drawing down contiguous ruin. The son of our ancient enemy is still alive: young Belmont owes me a noble revenge, and one of us must die.

CONST.

Are you then, sir, resolved on young Mr. Belmont's destruction?

SIR WILL.

As determin'd as fate. Your honour, the honour of my family, shall be retrieved, or I shall die in the attempt; the prize is great, and the venture is small, for what signifies a few remaining years of a banished wretch's life like mine?

CONST.

O fortune! how dost thou sport with my dearest hopes, and plunge me in complicated misery! What shall I do! where fly for succour, since every prospect shews even worse than the grave!

SIR WILL.

My misfortunes are nothing, for I have learned to bear them; fear not for me, my child.

CONST.

My fears, sir, are greater than you are sensible of. But are you stedfastly fix'd upon this bloody resolution?

SIR WILL.

Not heaven itself can shake my purpose.

CONST.

CONST.

I conjure you, my father, by that disastrous life you gave me, by your own misfortunes, by mine, which are equally afflicting, not to expose me to the misery of losing you just when I have found you. Have pity on me, and spare your life and mine.

Sir WILL.

By heavens, there's something in that voice that pierces my very heart; methinks I hear thy mother when you complain.

CONST.

Have some concern for the poor remains of your life, leave this city where you are surrounded with dangers. We'll both fly from it with pleasure, I'll leave all, and follow you; if you fix your retreat even among the desolate islands of the north, yet will I follow you. I'll lay the nightly pillow underneath thy head, I'll sit by and watch you to sleep; my hands shall toil for our subsistence, and I shall grow happy in thus discharging what I owe to you and Heaven. Shan't we go, pappa?

Sir WILL.

And must all my great hopes of revenge be given up at once?

CONST.

Think of it no more, we shall fly to be happy, and harbour no other thought but those of pleasure and peace.

Sir

Sir WILL.

Well then, I'll shew at once how much I love, by abandoning all the hopes I had of vengeance. If you are resolved to follow my fortunes, and smoothe my passage to the grave, to close my dying eyes, and take my last blessing, come away; permit me only to give the necessary orders for our departure; do you in the mean time get ready, and may a blessing attend all your future days. [Exit.

SCENE VII.

CONSTANTIA and LUCY.

CONST.

My resolution is fixed, my Lucy, Belmont and I are to part for ever; I shall never hear his protestations more: duty calls me from him, and I obey with pleasure.

LUCY.

Sure, madam, you mistake, he is but just gone, and will return in a few minutes.

CONST.

Gone! and without desiring to see me! Did he testify no reluctance at parting?

LUCY.

Had he not been interrupted by the lady of quality your rival.

1

CONST.

CONST.

To her then he now dedicates his time and his heart, and he came here with her, I suppose, only to add insult to his ingratitude ; and, after an absence of three whole days, only to shew how little he esteemed my company. Yet I will sur vive it, yes I will cherish a life now which may serve to support my poor old declining father.

LUCY.

Nay, prithee madam, but hear me, I swear that Mr. Belmont—

CONST.

He is perfidious. Hence every foolish passion from my heart. Unhappy father, from hence receive all my tenderness and assiduity.

LUCY.

May I die but you accuse him wrongfully, he is not perfidious, he is still brave, generous, and constant ; still loves with the warmest passion, and has given me the strongest instances of his sincerity.

CONST.

Love must submit to a nobler passion. I must attend on him to whom I owe my life, tho' I am ignorant whither we are going, or what may become of us ; yet, wherever we are, no change can make us more miserable.

LUCY.

LUCY.

Yet still you will not hear. Prithee, madam, be composed, you know I love, and cannot see you thus moved.

CONST.

Thanks to my girl. And prithee, Lucy, do you think you can have courage to follow me?

LUCY.

Yes, to the end of the world; but why leave a man that loves you?

CONST.

Prithee no more of him. Even tho' he actually did love me, yet I would leave him. The gentleman whom you saw with me.—But we are interrupted, follow me to the next apartment; and you shall hear it all.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT

A C T V. S C E N E I.

CONSTANTIA, FREEPORT, and FABRICE.

FAB.

BELIEVE me, madam, your design of leaving us gives me the utmost uneasiness.

CONST.

If any gratitude, sir, of mine for past favours can in the least be an equivalent, you shall ever have mine. And you sir, (*to Freeport*) whose generosity was exerted in so extraordinary a manner; believe me, I feel no uneasiness greater than that of being unable to return your civility.

FREEPORT.

How is this! Why did you not say this before? If you are pleased with my civilities, where's the necessity of parting? as for any apprehensions from superior power that's a mere shadow, for ladies have nothing to fear.

FAB.

The old gentleman too seems to be in equal haste. Concern upon his face, grief on hers; they almost affect me with equal sorrow.

FREEPORT.

As for tears, they are unmanly, our eyes were given for better purposes than to weep with.

M

And

And yet I confess I feel a pain at parting that almost shames me. O scandalous, thus to be caught by a mere girl! It must not be. And yet I should like a correspondence well enough, if you thought proper to honour me from your retreat. Perhaps we may see one another again, and I may have it in my power to thank you for remembering me.

CONST.

Sir, that indeed is but a small favour; you may depend upon my compliance.

FAB.

Pardon me, madam, but perhaps you are ignorant that Mr. Freeport has been your surety for five hundred pound, which he loses upon your offering to withdraw.

CONST.

Heavens! still another reverse of fortune, still must I——

FREEPORT.

Prithee be under no concern about that. Let not such a trifle prevent her journey if she is determined to go. What are five hundred guineas to me, I despise the counters. (*Apart to Fabrice.*) Let her have five hundred more, and convey them privately into her baggage. You may go, madam, whenever you think proper; I expect your correspondence, and hope to see you again the first opportunity. I own I have conceived a friendship for you.

I

SCENE

SCENE II.

BELMONT and his Servant at the end of the stage, CONSTANTIA and the rest in front.

BELMONT.

Let some of you wait here. You run to the office, and bring me the parchment I spoke of, when it is executed. You go and prepare all things for my reception in my new house. (*He takes a paper from his pocket and reads.*) How happy am I in thus securing the happiness of my dear girl.

CONST.

Ah me, his presence renews all my fears and sorrows!

FREEPORT.

These courtiers are ever coming at improper seasons, with his finery and smock face, I can hardly bear the sight of him. Yet, after all, what's all that to me, am I really caught, or no? not quite such a boy as that neither. Yet, in order to prevent troublesome consequences, I had as good take my leave.

CONST.

Why will you leave us, sir; believe me, I part with pain from so much sincerity and real merit.

M 2

FREE-

FREEPORT.

No ceremony, child, it may make me childish else. You have made no impression on my heart yet, and I am resolved to be on my guard for the future. However, I shall go up into one of the windows and see you go off. Come, Fabrice, let us endeavour to forget those little rubs in our way to happiness; let us lessen our passions by dissipation.

S C E N E III.

CONSTANTIA and BELMONT.

BELMONT.

And is it at last permitted me to have the pleasure of seeing you again! My labours in your service are amply repaid by a moment's conversation. But your situation here, madam, give me leave to observe, is below your rank and merit. I have hired an house more suitable to your quality and virtues. Yet, why this appearance of sorrow? You weep too, madam. Has any affront been offered? Has he, in whose company I just now found you, presumed to treat you with any unbecoming freedoms?

CONST.

Far otherwise, my Belmont, he's a simple good-natured man, rudely virtuous, who has just pitied my misfortunes, who has attempted to console me in distress; he, if he loved me, would never have left me for three whole days with-

without the least notice, without once writing to me ; he would never have pursued my rival, even into my presence ; and there shocked me with his addresses.

BELMONT.

Why, why, Constantia, will you thus reproach me ! You know I would rather die than even undergo your suspicion. I was absent only in your service. I still thought only of you, and in spite of yourself I have endeavoured to serve you. If upon my return to you I found here that haughty passionate woman, for whom you are pleased to reproach me, I only addressed her in order to prevent the effects of her resentment. As to your accusing me of not writing, you yourself must be sensible of the injustice of that imputation.

CONST.

I have received no letters.

BELMONT.

Then she has intercepted them. How does the baseness of her behaviour encrease my respect for you ? How should it even encrease yours, since you find it necessary that even virtue demands a protector ? And yet, Constantia, give me now leave to reproach in my turn ; was it not unkind, was it not cruel, to conceal from me your name and quality, your wants and misfortunes ? was that using me well, Constantia ?

CONST.

CONST.

And who then has informed you at last ?

BELMONT.

She, (*pointing to Lucy*) your own Confidante.

CONST.

Have you too, Lucy, betray'd me ?

LUCY.

Madam, you endeavoured to betray yourself,
I only served you.

CONST.

You know me then. You know what hatred
has always divided both our families ; you know
how active your father was in the undoing of
mine ; you are sensible that it was he who re-
duced me to this deplorable state of indigence,
and will you still venture to love me ?

BELMONT.

Yet for ever adore you. It is my duty. It
lies upon me to repair the injustice of my fami-
ly. My heart, my fortune, my very reputa-
tion, is wholly thine. Let us lose the name of
enemies by our union. I have here brought the
marriage contract, permit me to insert the name
of Constantia, so much dearer than my own.
Let the remorse and the love of the son recom-
pense the faults of the father.

CONST.

CONST.

It cannot be. But this very moment, and I shall be obliged to leave you for ever.

BELMONT.

Never, no first you shall spurn me from your feet. Like a drowning wretch will I still hang upon you; but while I have life, you shall not, must not leave me.

LUCY.

Indeed, madam, you must not go, all your resolutions are desperate, but they shall not succeed if I have power to obstruct them.

BELMONT.

Who could have inspired such a resolution, so fatal to all my future hopes of happiness!

CONST.

One to whom I owe a duty greater than the respect I feel for you. A father.

BELMONT.

Your father! Heavens, where is he? when came he? how conceal'd?

CONST.

He is here, and we have agreed to escape together, it is fix'd.

BELMONT.

It shall not be. I swear by yourself that he shall not take you from me. Conduct me to him,

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him, where, falling at his aged feet, perhaps I may move him to pity.

CONST.

My dear Belmont, avoid him; if you love me, avoid him, as you would shun your deadliest enemy; he has come thus far only for long delay'd vengeance, determined on taking your life, or to lose his own. I have offered to fly with him only to turn him from his fatal purpose.

BELMONT.

Yet is yours more cruel. Believe me, I fear him not, and he shall be sorry for this resolution. (*Apart.*) My servant's not yet return'd; misfortune has wings, while good news crawls like a lazy insect to our relief.

CONST.

See where he comes; by all our mutual tenderness, conceal yourself from him, deprive me, for a while the pleasure, and him the horror of seeing you. At least retire for a while.

BELMONT.

I obey, tho' with regret, for all your commands are laws to me. Yet I shall soon return with such arms as will make his fall from his hands with shame and confusion.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

Sir WILLIAM and CONSTANTIA.

Sir WILL.

Come, my child, the only good I have on earth remaining, my comforter and friend, let us now leave this bad world, and retreat to solitude and happiness.

CONST.

Sir, I'm prepared. All your desires shall be mine, nor shall you ever find me slow in executing your commands, but let us now delay a moment, a little moment.

Sir WILL.

What, after having yourself pressed my speedy departure! after having offered to follow where I should lead! Have you so soon altered your resolution? Do solitude and deserts affright you, and does pleasure oppose duty?

CONST.

Sir, I'm incapable of change. I'm prepared to follow, but once more let me entreat a short delay: grant but a few minutes to one who shall soon dedicate her whole life to serve you; refuse me not so small a request; the moments I ask are precious to me.

N

Sir

Sir WILL.

The moments indeed are precious, and yet you desire to lose them. Are you not sensible that we're in continual danger of being discovered; that I am sought after; that you may soon behold your father drag'd to the most infamous death?

CONST.

I have no power to refuse; I follow, sir, even ashamed of the small delay—but it proceeded from a vain hope that—but to what purpose to think on it.—Lead on, sir.

SCENE V.

FREEPORT and FABRICE appear on one side, while Sir WILLIAM and CONSTANTIA confer on the other.

FREEPORT to FabrICE.

Her maid has brought back a part of the baggage; I fancy they have changed their resolution, and I confess I'm not sorry. I have acquired a kind of friendship for the girl; yet nothing very violent, no, no, a sort of inquietude at parting, that's all; an unaccountable sensation, which is quite unexpected, I don't know how to describe it.

Sir

Sir WILLIAM to Freeport.

Farewel, sir, and take this last testimony of the sincerity of our esteem. Your virtues have taught me to pardon the villainies of mankind.

FREEPORT.

You are determined then upon your journey. And yet I could wish it were otherwise. I have a thought just come into my head, which will, perhaps, be to our mutual advantage. Permit me to unfold.

SCENE VI.

The former Actors. BELMONT at the end of the Stage, receiving a packet from one of his servants.

BELMONT.

I am at last possessed of this assurance of my felicity. What thanks do I not owe to Providence, which has assisted my endeavours!

FREEPORT.

What, shall I ever be pestered with this spawn of nobility, his fopperies and his compliments shock me.

Sir WILLIAM to Constantia.

Are you acquainted with that gentleman, my dear? Who is he?

CONST.

He! Sir, he is—— O heavens, what shall I say! (*Aside.*)

FAB.

That, sir, is young Mr. Belmont, one of the most gallant and generous men of the age.

Sir WILL.

Sure it is heaven itself that has thrown the tyrant in my path. I could, had I not seen him, have forgiven all his family's injustice; but now, reason, memory, my thousand wrongs, my ruin'd name and fortune, all cry out for revenge; nor will I refuse the call. How gay he looks! made happy by the ruin of thousands, his mirth is an insult upon what I feel. Come forth my honest sword, revenge! revenge! or death!

CONST.

My father, what madness! O hold him! hold him!

Sir WILL.

Ungtateful woman! and is this the duty you owe me?

FABRICE interposing.

Sir, it is my duty to prevent violence in this house; I entreat you will suppress your resentment.

FREE-

FREEPORT.

What right has any man to prevent people who have a mind to fight. Permit them to satisfy themselves, Englishmen are free.

BELMONT, still in his former situation.

Sir, you, if I mistake not, are father to this Lady?

CONST.

What will become of us?

Sir WILL.

Let cowards hide their names and their intentions, I scorn it. I am that lady's father, and have come hither to revenge her wrongs and mine upon the enemy that has undone us.

FAB.

Excuse me, sir, you must not—cannot, in my house.

BELMONT.

Prithee give him liberty, I have it in my power in a moment to disarm him. (*Drawing.*)

CONST.

And can Belmont!

BELMONT.

Can I! Yes, and will. Father of the beautiful Constantia, you see in me the son of your inveterate enemy (*throwing down his sword*) you see him thus prepar'd for defence.

FREE-

THE COFFEE-HOUSE.

FREEPORT.

An extraordinary method of defence, truly.

BELMONT.

Pierce my breast with one hand, but with the other receive this. (*Gives a writing.*) Read, and then if you are for blood, I am prepared.

Sir WILL.

How! What's here? My pardon! The restoration of my title and fortune! Heavens! and is it to thee I owe so much? O my benefactor, deprive me of this life for having so injuriously attempted yours.

CONST.

O happy change! Now let me call him lover, now let me fly to my father without fear, I'm lost in happiness and unexpected joy.

BELMONT.

And now, sir, let me ask a blessing, as from my father.

Sir WILL.

How can I repay such generosity.

BELMONT taking Constantia's hand.

Here is my recompence.

Sir WILL.

And yours let her be. For who so deserving of her. O my children, we shall yet see happy days,

days, and this grey head of mine shall go down gently to the grave; a day like this repays a life of misery.

FREEPORT to Fabrice.

Faith, friend, I always thought this girl was not made for me; however, she has fallen into good hands, and I e'en wish them happiness all together.

F I N I S.

